PM's announcement on July 14,2000 will not put VSNL in financial and contractual jeopardy *vis-s-vis* FLAG, and VSNL will continue to follow transparent purchase procedures.

Free facilities to labour force

1755. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:
SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government plans to give free telephones to its three lakhs employees of Telecom Department at a cost of Rs. 1200/-crore to the Government;

(b) whether it is also reported that similar sops are being offered to railway employees; and

(c) if so, what action Government are taking to check this practice?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Sir, it has been decided to provide certain concessional facilities such as waiver of registration charges, installation charges and bi-monthly rental (at the present level), to the employees of the Department of Telecom Services and Telecommunications who wish to take private connections. Estimated financial implications involved are Rs. 24 Crore—Non Recurring and between RS 78.3 Crore (for low calling) to Rs. 99.9 Crore (for High Calling) per annum—Recurring. No formal orders have, however, been issued so far in view of stay granted by Hon'ble High Court of Kerala.

(b) Sir, Ministry of Railways and some other Departments are also providing some concessions to their employees.

(c) Decisions to grant concessions to the employees are taken on the overall administrative and operational requirement of the respective Departments.

Free telephone facilities to employees of Telecom Department

1756. SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister's Office has recently cleared a proposal